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Poem XXXIV Ruth Behar

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Ruth Behar

POEM XXXIV

My grandmother used to say about my grandfather: “We have been married for over fifty years and I still don’t know if he prefers the breast or the thigh of a chicken. He always says it’s the same to him, but I want to know which part he really likes better.” He refused to tell her, refused to admit to a preference. I used to think he acted that way out of kindness, so she could eat what she most wanted. But my dear grandfather, please forgive me for disturbing the silence of your grave, lately I wonder: Did your kindness force my grandmother to give away, always, what she wanted for fear it was what you wanted? All those years, did you eat the breast when you wanted the thigh, not out of kindness but for the pleasure of taking from her mouth the taste of the flesh she longed for?